

Random Thoughts: Browns at Bengals

Written by {ga=mitch}

Tuesday, December 25 2007 7:00 PM -

Nothing like choking away a chance to clinch a playoff spot after Game 15 to sour your mood for the week, says Mitch in this week's Random Thoughts column. Mitch calls last Sunday's loss the toughest one for Browns fans since the 2002 playoff loss to the Stoolers, and also hits on his jinx of Derek Anderson, who he called for the team to extend in a Sunday morning column we ran about 7 hours before kickoff.



Three days have passed, including Christmas, and I, like many Browns fans, have still not gotten over the bitterness of Sunday's game. Nothing like choking away a chance to clinch a playoff spot after Game 15 to sour your mood for the week. Normally, I tend to have a bit more humor in my columns after a loss, just to poke fun at everything and lighten things up. That's going to be hard this week, as this was as painful of a loss that we Browns fans have had since that playoff game against the Inbreds in 2002.

I do apologize to everyone in northern Ohio for my part in this debacle. After months of being no more than lukewarm to the QB play of Derek Anderson, I finally try to look past my prejudices and write a piece about how he should be signed to a [long term contract](#). So of course, he responds to my change of heart by melting down like he had just been hit with a bucket of water by Dorothy and the Scarecrow. Thanks for nothing, Mitch.

Have I changed my mind about him again? I don't know. Unlike everyone else on all of the boards and talk shows, I'm not calling for his head just yet.

Mostly, that's due to the fact that we Cleveland fans tend to never forgive or forget a goat...and right now, DA's been fitted for the horns and a tin can dinner, sitting

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right next to other Cleveland sports "legends" like Charles Nagy, Jose Mesa, Danny Ferry (just for being a big lump of cap-eating nothing while Ron Harper got rings), Earnest Byner, the 1986 Browns' Prevent Defense, Larry Hughes, or even more recently, the playoff choke of C.C., Fausto, and Hafner's disappearing bat.

Last week I said that you cannot judge people on individual games, so I can hardly throw DA under the bus for his egg-laying in Cincinnati (as much as Mitch the Fan would love to). Whatever the fate of Derek shall be, I have decided to trust entirely in the Browns brain trust, as they have more facts available than I, and have had a 1000% better opportunity to judge Brady Quinn.

But here are the facts:

The Browns have been horrible on the road and great at home. But the 3-5 record on the road is more disturbing as the Browns lost to bad teams from Oakland, Arizona, and now Cincinnati on the road, while struggling to beat horrible teams from New York and Baltimore (thank you, Phil). I am aware that Anderson doesn't deserve all the blame for those losses, as the defense and special teams contributed just as much. But some disturbing stats exist.

Anderson's home stats: 117 comp - 220 att - 1702 yds - 13 TD - 5 INT - 88.9 QB Rating

Anderson's away stats: 164 comp - 296 att - 1920 yds - 15 TD - 13 INT - 73.9 QB Rating

Can his woeful performances on the road be fixed? Since it's doubtful that the NFL will allow for Cleveland to play all of their games at CBS, they need to be.

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Why is he so bad on the road? That's what the brass needs to figure out. If it's just because he can't handle the noise and pressure...then there's trouble.

Then there are the rumors started by Rizzo that Bill Parcells is in love with DA, and is wanting to pry him loose from Cleveland. As discussed on [the boards](#), this could involve the Big Tuna first trading the #1 overall to Dallas for their two #1 picks, of which one of them would go to Cleveland...which would be quite ironic since that would be the pick sent to Dallas originally for the Brady Quinn deal.

I am absolutely on the fence in this regard. I have major, major concerns about Anderson, but as noted last week, he is blessed with all the physical tools, so IF he can learn the other aspects (finesse passes, pulling his head out of his ass on the road), he can be a very good starting QB.

Good luck, Phil, Romeo, Chud, and Randy Lerner on your upcoming decision. It's only the most important one you will make.

The 2 Minute Drill (as painful as a dentist's drill)

Have you ever seen a team as bad at clock management as the Browns (Brian Billick excluded)?

The ends of each half of this game might have been the worst four minutes of football I have seen in my life coming from a playoff contending team.

Of course, everyone knows the results of the final two minutes of the first half. Not content to give the Bungles one touchdown off a pick, DA

throws his very next pass into the arms of defender...possibly the closest he came all day to hitting someone right between the numbers.

But even more frustrating was how they handled the end of the game. 1:48 remaining, one time out, and needing 83 yards to win the game. So what do they do? Throw short passes, and refuse to spike the DAMN BALL!!!

This cost them about 30 seconds in playing time...which might just have been helpful considering the last play of the game was a first down play.

Instead, Anderson completed several passes of the 8 - 12 yard variety, and then would get up to the line...survey the defense...look again at it...and then snap the ball. Each time, I was seeing 10 seconds go off the clock that could have been saved had he spiked the ball.

Was he that stupid? Or just trying to save his stats since spikes go down as incompletions?

The Rest of the Game

Did it really matter? Actually, it did, as there were Browns that weren't named Anderson that were also shooting themselves in the foot. And when that wasn't happening, the breaks just weren't going Cleveland's way.

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The opening kickoff set the tone for the entire day. Holt fumbles, and it looks like Cribbs has scooped up the loose ball. But when they unpile everything, Cincinnati has it back, negating a perfect opportunity to immediately step on throats of the indifferent and imploding Bungles team.

But like Lt. Col. Slade in "[Scent of a Woman](#)", they were just getting' WARMED UP!!!

Drove down to the Bengals' 29. Botched snap on a FG attempt.

Down to the Bengals' 19 after a Bodden pick. Went for it on 4th and 1, Jamal was stopped cold.

2nd down at midfield on the next drive. Incompletion, sack, punt.

The aforementioned end of first half disaster.

And then totally wasting a fine defensive effort in the second half by twice throwing interceptions while in the Bengals' red zone.

Plus, let's not forget the fact that once again the Browns entered the game with only four healthy defensive linemen, plus a banged up Ethan Kelley. And let's also not forget that two of those defensive linemen have AARP cards in their pockets.

Robaire gets hurt and misses action...Kelley gets hurt again, and goes on the IR. The other three are left playing almost every single play, unless Grantham decides to use McGinest (also an AARP member) as an interior lineman.

Any wonder why they Browns had another RB go for over 100 yards against them?

Lost in the Noise

~ Braylon Edwards has set a new single season Browns record for touchdown receptions with 15.

~ Braylon also currently has 1222 yards in receptions, and only needs another 15 to break the single season record set by Webster Slaughter in 1989.

~ Kellen Winslow now has 1044 yards, the most ever in a single season for a tight end.

~ The Browns have two 1000 yard receivers for the first time in their history.

~ The Browns can still have a 10 win season, which

would be only their second since 1989.

~ Joe Thomas will almost certainly be playing in the Pro Bowl, as Bills' LT Jason Peters has a groin injury that will keep him out of the Bills last game this weekend, and probably the Pro-Bowl as well. Thomas is first alternate amongst tackles.

Blurbs from an ADHD Mind

~~ Bobby Petrino has to be thanking his lucky stars for Bill Parcells. The Big Tuna seems to be The Big Piñata this week for many sportswriters and commentators. Not surprising considering the Big Mercenary's classless using of Falcons owner Arthur Blank to drive up his price tag when backing out of the Falcons deal to take a more lucrative one in south Florida. Nothing new here...it's the same routine Parcells has pulled time and time again. Give

him two years, and he'll get bored again, taking another million dollar analysts' job at E\$PN or Fox...all the while pimping himself to the next sucker with a job offer.

~~ I've got to give Willie McGinest some props for his class in addressing the subject of the Colts sitting out many of their regulars for the final game against the Titans. As quoted in Peter King's Monday Morning Quarterback column, Willie had this to say about it; "It's not up to the Indianapolis Colts to do us any favors. They've played well enough to deserve the right to play who they want this week. Kudos to them. We'd like Peyton to play four quarters, obviously, but we understand what they're doing."

~~ If the Browns get into the playoffs, it looks

like they'll be flying out to San Diego for a meeting with the Chargers. Although many Browns fans might think they prefer that to the prospect of losing for a third time to the Squealers at the Cow Pasture, think about this: LaDainian Tomlinson against the Browns front seven. Shudder.

~~ The latest rumor from Pro Football Talk, the one source with as much credibility as [Jayson Blair](#), states that Bill Parcells also covets Romeo Crennel as the next head coach of the Dolphins. Of course, PFT doesn't bother mentioning the itsy-bitsy fact that Romeo is under contract stop them from their Enquire level "journalism". But if it's true, let's hope Romeo takes Grantham with him. And then they can hire another Parcells buddy for Offensive Coordinator: Maurice Carthon.

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~ Troy Smith didn't look too bad against the Seahawks on Sunday. Here's hoping he has a great day Sunday against the Inbreds.